

The Impact of Culture on the Concept of Love in *Love in the Time of Cholera* and in Persian Literature References

Mansoureh Sharifzadeh and Aghil Zarook
The Ministry of Education
Tehran and Mazandaran, Iran

‘[The] Path of love seemed easy at first; what came was many hardships’ ----Hafiz of Shiraz¹

Abstract

Love, as an essential motif in life, may be expressed in various forms based on the cultural identities of the people expressing it. The concept of love in *Love in the Time of Cholera* is demonstrated by the two forms of romantic and elusive love. The book is a mirror of the cultural and traditional values of the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Colombia. The rejection of the catholic faith, and religion in general, can be considered a central argument of the story. The poetic language and the precise descriptions expand the narrative’s attraction. The concept of love in Persian literature, on the other hand, is a reflection of virtue and devotion, i.e. “virtual /earthly love is a bridge to real / heavenly love”² a philosophy attributed to renowned Iranian scientists Avicenna and Mulla Sadra. Iranian cultural values and Islamic instructions for religious morality have been integrated in each other for fourteen centuries. In the Quranic Surah of *Yusuf*, love is a means by which Joseph/Yusuf is tested by God to be granted a higher divine position. This concept of love is an ingrained notion in Persian literature. This essay compares the concept of love in the Colombian and Iranian cultures. The two main parts of this essay deal with *Love in the Time of Cholera* and Persian literary works from early times to modern day.

Keywords: *Literature; Colombia; Iran; Culture; Values; Virtue; Love; Sex*

The purpose of this paper is to show how the concept of love is used by writers from two cultures. In this case, the authors of this paper will show how the concept of love is expressed by the western writer and Nobelist, Gabriel Garcia Marquez (1927-2014) utilizing the novel, *Love in the Time of Cholera* compared to writers from Persian literature, which the Iranian peoples have read and know. We wish to show that there are fundamental cultural differences in the way Iranians and Colombians view, perceive, and comprehend love. For Iranians, Professor Farzad Sharifian (a linguist with a multidisciplinary background in cognitive science, anthropology and education)³ provides a rationale for our comparison. He says,

¹ Khwāja Shams-ud-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez, the best known Persian poet of the 14th century.

² المجاز قنطره الحقيقة <http://dinvamazhab.persianblog.ir/post/111/>.

³ Retrieved from <http://profiles.arts.monash.edu.au/farzad-sharifian/>.

A culture is a way of life of a group of people- -the behaviors, beliefs, values, and symbols that they accept, generally without thinking about them, and that are passed along by communication and imitation from one generation to the next.... (and that) in general exposure to other cultures have expanded my horizons and my attitude toward my aspects on my life. (Prosser, et al., 2013, p. 459)

Another element in the development of this paper is an oft told story in Iran. It is the respect that Seyyed Hassan Khomeini (grandson of the founder of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini) gave to Gabriela Garcia Marquez. They met in Cuba in the early 1990's as an Iranian delegation headed by Seyyed Hassan was there at the invitation of Fidel Castro.⁴ Castro, who became aware of Seyyed Hassan's respect for literature, suggested that he meet with Marquez. (Hassan Khomeini, 2014). When Sharifzadeh and Zarook met Beatriz Salas, the Cultural staff of the Embassy of Venezuela in Tehran on the 6th of June, 2014, in the margin, Beatriz said that, when Marquez was told his books had been translated into Persian, he was surprised.⁵ Sharifzaeh thinks that Marquez's surprise has been because he was well familiar with the Iranian press regulations.

Various elements of the Latin American and personal interest in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's works and his *magical realism* style formed the motivation for the second author, Aghil Zarook, to write his Master's thesis on *One Hundred Years of Solitude*. Although Zarook is well familiar with the world literature, he prefers Marquez's *magical realism* that has specially been mastered in *One Hundred years of Solitude*. Zarook has dedicated his theses to Gabriel Garcia Marquez.

Love in the Time of Cholera was written by Nobel prize- winning Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez. Its third person narrator tells a love story that reconnects its lovers after fifty one years, nine months, and four days, while giving a profound depiction of the historical and political background of its location. The author explores the people's cultural, traditional, and religious values and thoughts. The beauty of the language of the story and its precise details give an overall view of life in general and the stages of the long life journey, in particular.

The book's major theme circles around three main characters: Florentino Ariza, the lover; Fermina Daza, the beloved; and her husband, Dr. Juvenal Urbino del Calle. It is a triangular love story in which love, sex, and lust are of significant importance, yet it also implicitly emphasizes the importance of faith.

⁴ Hassan Khomeini Recalls Meeting with Gabriel Garcia Marquez, from http://en.imam-khomeini.ir/en/n7804/News/Hassan_Khomeini_Recalls_Meeting_with_Gabriel_Garcia_Marquez.

⁵ A Great Day with Dr. Beatriz Salas, The Cultural Staff of the Embassy of Venezuela in Tehran, adapted from; <http://www.michaelprosser.com/2014/06/mansoureh-sharifzadeh-great-day-dr-beatriz-salas-cultural-staff-embassy-venezuela-tehran-june-11-2014-post-2073/>

Love in the Time of Cholera demonstrates the advent of love in a society whose people yearn to replace their life style with European standards. The book portrays a natural life process, and the narrative's main foci are the beauty of the human body, love, and sex.

The book touches on most of the cultural aspects of its society, including weddings, funerals, celebrations, rituals, anniversaries, communities, areas, districts, decorations, social values, and clothing. It brings the readers into the real atmosphere of the time. Everything from housing details to livestock to cholera itself is demonstrated successfully.

The cultural values demonstrated are quite worldly, and unlike the Iranian standards no religious and spiritual regulations are focused on. The standards of pleasure are shallow, worldly, and immoral. The dominant cultural values discourage the people from coping with political and social problems and inspire them to remain in poverty helplessly. Financial life conditions cannot be enhanced; and in this literary work, one can't earn money unless it is inherited.

In the Persian literary tradition, on the other hand, love should be based on Islamic tenets, such as virtue, separation, devotion, and freedom from lust. The mentioned points are especially evident in the love stories and poems of the post Islamic era; means since the occupation of Islam in Persia during 628 to 632 A.D. (Purshariati, 2008, p. 4). In this regard, the best example of such literary focus is portrayed in the 12th Surah of the Quran, Joseph. On the other hand some of the most famous Persian classical poets as Mawlana, Hafiz and Sa'di are icons of the passion and love that the Persian Culture and language present. The mentioned poets deploy the most virtual and spiritual language to portray love and they create the most romantic and philosophical concepts in the realm of love and affection.

Iran, as a Muslim, Shi'a nation, encourages writers and poets to create spiritual dimensions in their treatment of the concept of love. For Shi'as, love should be devoted to Allah, the prophet, and the religious figures, especially Imam Hussein, who sacrificed his life for the establishment of truth and piety to maintain Allah's ethics in the world of humanity. Writing exhaustively about the impact of culture on the concepts of love as evoked in *Love in the Time of Cholera* and the Persian literary tradition would take hundreds of pages. This paper seeks only to act as a prologue to further studies.

This paper consists of two main parts that deals with the concept of love in Colombian cultural values and Persian cultural and religious standards separately. We intend to demonstrate the concepts in isolation to bring the readers into a broader judgment about the concept of love in Colombian and Persian cultural values. In this paper we intend to do a parallel comparison in which the elements of each literature are presented separately, to leave the reader to integrate the substance of the comparison.

First, it examines different dimensions of *Love in the Time of Cholera*, including a description of Marquez' life, a summary of the novel, and an analyses of the characters. Secondly, it illustrates different dimensions of the Persian literary tradition, including a description of Persia's literature over time, summaries of some of its most celebrated works, and an overview of its values. Finally a conclusion will be presented.

Review of literature

For a comparison between aspects of Iranian and western literature, Mansoureh Sharifzadeh (first author) expected Aghil Zarook's (second writer) proposal to be something like a romantic love story, much like, *Gone with the Wind* (Mitchell, 1936), *Anna Karenina* (Tolstoy, 1873-1877), *The Feather* (Matson, 1927), *Daddy Long-legs* (Webster, 1912), or *The Blind Owl* (Hedayat, 1937). That is, the mentioned novels are love stories that basically focus on any sort of love affair that is free of lust. They all demonstrate pure love that creates a hijab between lovers too. They are full of suffering and separation. They bring the readers' attention to the idea of love that doesn't emphasize the importance of a physical relationship but one of the heart and mind longing for the loved. This latter relationship had such a deep effect on Sharifzadeh that it motivated her to write *The Blind Owl of Sadeh Hedayat: An Attempt to Cope with Humiliation* (Sharifzadeh, 2013), to focus on the social and historical aspects of the novel. *The Blind Owl*, brings the reader deeply into other problems that might seem even more important than the love relationship which is melancholy rather than romantic or illusive. Thus, it came as a shock to her that *Love in the Time of Cholera* was written in such a way as to express love in such physically frank ways.

Such a shock was also reflected in the response of the Iranian Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. To give a more vivid description, for this claim, it is necessary to mention **Memories of my Melancholy Whores** (Marquez, 1988). The Farsi translation was banned by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance in Iran after 5000 copies were printed and sold, as the book didn't seem to fit the moral aspects of Iranian culture. (Banning, 2007). In Iran some books are assumed to be promoting prostitution and a sign of Cultural Invasion. Thus, **Censoring an Iranian Love Story**, (Mandanipoor, 2011); was banned in Iran as its author had not considered the regulations governing such material.

It has dealt with some of the political aspects including the ministry of Cultures and Islamic Guidance policy in the process of publishing the books. In Iran, the books of any kind except for the educational texts should be observed and reviewed by the Ministry of Education administration office. The purpose is to monitor all the texts in order to be free of any critical points about the politics and religion. This brings the books into a harder publishing process. The books should not include any points about the sexual relationship and love stories should only follow the religious and cultural regulations. The mentioned points are necessary to be considered in the present condition of Iran today but this is what has been done since the old ages.

To give a better explanation in this case, it is necessary to point *The Blind Owl* of Sadeh Hedayat out,

The book was self-published in 1937 in Bombay, and got published in 1941 in Tehran, Iran by its author, Sadeh Hedayat (1903-1951). It was subsequently banned in Iran. This book brings up the most heartbreaking realities of a society that was ruled over by the dictatorship of Reza Shah (1924-1941) and the dim period of the rulers of Qajar Dynasty (1794-1925) when no freedom of thought

and speech were permitted and intellectuals were tortured under the most severe critical pressures.⁶

So, Iran has not been very open to the publication of books of all kinds. The Iranians have been dealing with this problem in one way or another since long but they have never stopped their utmost efforts in writing or publishing the materials, even if it comes to their publications in other countries to find a solution for the problem. For instance, since one year ago Sharifzadeh has been trying to get a Persian translation of “A Journey through Turbulence” by Deepack Tripathi published. She has submitted the text to several publishers, but neither of them have approved. Recently some private sectors have taken action to publish the manuscripts with the permission of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. This seems to be a satisfactory result, as the writers do the expense and finally their books find their way in the market. This can be a good improvement in the case of publication which has happened since a few months ago after the election of president Rouhani in June 2013.

Modern Persian literature sources as **Chashmhayash (Her Eyes)** (Alavi, 1952), **The Husband of Lady Ahou** (Afghani, 1962), and **Love on the Pavement** (Mastoor, 1389/2009), are romances based on Iranian cultural values. Mastoor’s love stories are emphasized because his writings have been quite acceptable in the realm of love stories in Iran today. His books are successfully published and read with no censorship. He has integrated romantic love with philosophy and has been trying to bring his writings being accepted by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance. The themes of all of Mastoor’s writings are love, life, grief, and God. Based on the social rules, virgin love should be the base of all Iranian love stories, otherwise they don’t find the chance of being published.

To emphasize without the implication of a sweeping generalization, there is a unique trend in this case of Iran. Iran monitors all the writing activities, even on the social Media. Many Iranian websites and weblogs that contain articles, materials and illustrations that are against the Iranian morals and publishing rules are filtered. Persian Hamshahri, morning Newspaper writes, “The content of Social media including *WhatsApp*, *Viber* and *Tango* will be monitored and managed by the judicial authority.”⁷ This might exist in some nations to some extents, China can be a good example in this case too. Honestly, it should be said that many Iranians, both younger and older generations, use self-censorship. They feel responsible for the content of their writings and avoid writing what is against the rules; otherwise they will be fined or punished in one way or another. So, cultural points of view and how the people are brought up bring different perceptions. The perceptions are based on different reasons. For instance Iran, throughout its history, has always been through different political and social problems. The religious points of

⁶ The Blind Owl Of Sadegh Hedayat: An Attempt to Cope with Humiliation, Mansoureh Sharifzadeh, Tehran-Iran
<http://www.michaelprosser.com/2013/08/mansoureh-sharifzadeh-the-blind-owl-of-sadegh-hedayat-an-attempt-to-cope-with-humiliation-tehran-iran-2013724-posted-august-13-2013-post-1789i/>.

⁷ *WhatsApp*, *Viber* and *Tango* will be monitored and Managed, Farsi Hamshahri daily Newspaer, ISSN 1735-6386, Vol 22, No. 6357. Tue, SEP 23 2014 Headline and the complete report on p. 2.

view have been the base that has never permitted a Muslim to go beyond the religious regulations. Even if individuals overlook the religious standards, the social rules never give the chance. The people themselves, monitor each other's activities and try to restrict each other. If anything happens in opposition with the social regulations of the Iranian Muslim nation, the cultural invasion is assumed to be responsible for that. The more we learn about the worldwide culture, a deeper insight can be gained about our own culture, its worldwide context, and international affairs. Reading GGM's works is informative because it takes the Iranian reader to a world of love that is quite different from what an Iranian thinks.

Love in the Time of Cholera

Love in the Time of Cholera was first published in Spanish in 1985 with the title *El amor en los tiempos del Colera* and in 1988 in the English translation. The book has since been translated by four Iranian translators into Persian. Of course 'sexual statements' might add attraction to the novel and that is a fact that can never be denied and they are actually part of why the book appeals to readers, but Iranian publishing rules restrict the books in this case. So the skillful translators have removed those parts in a way not to ruin the main messages and since then the book has had a good market. The reasons are that the book fascinates readers and is a compelling literary work. The descriptions bring the readers into the actual life style of late 19th and early 20th century of Colombia. It seems as if real scene were being seen.

The story occurs mainly in an unnamed port city somewhere near the Caribbean Sea and the Magdalena River, between 1870 and 1930. While the city remains unnamed, descriptions imply that it might be Cartagena, Colombia, where García Márquez lived during his early years. (Setting)

Gabriel José de la Concordia García Márquez (1927-2014) was born in the town of Aracataca,⁸ Colombia. He is a Colombian novelist and short story writer, screenwriter, and journalist who was raised by his maternal grandparents. His grandparents influenced his early development very strongly (Saldivar, 1997, p. 87). His grandfather, Colonel Nicolás Ricardo Márquez Mejía, whom he called "Papalelo" was a liberal veteran of the Thousand Days War⁹ as well as an excellent storyteller, (ibid, p. 102).

Marquez's grandmother, Doña Tranquilina Iguarán Cotes, played an equally influential role in his upbringing. He was inspired by the way she "treated the extraordinary as something perfectly natural" (Mendoza & Marquez 1983, p. 12). The house was filled with stories of ghosts. According to Marquez, she was "the source of [his] magical, superstitious and supernatural view of reality" (Simons, 1986). He enjoyed his grandmother's unique way of telling stories.

⁸ The town is widely recognized as the model for the mythical "Macondo," the central village in García Márquez's masterpiece, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.

⁹ The Thousand Days' War (1899–1902) (Spanish: *Guerra de los Mil Días*) was a civil armed conflict in the then-newly created Republic of Colombia.

Marquez, with his deep psychological insight, is considered to be one of the most significant authors of the 20th century; he was awarded the 1972 Neustadt International Prize for Literature and the 1982 Nobel Prize in Literature. His work is summarized as,

Reality is an important theme in all of Garcia Marquez's works. His works, except for a few of his early works, all reflect the reality of life in Colombia, and this theme determines the rational structure of the books. His style has been labeled in *One Hundred Years of Solitude* as "magical realism."¹⁰

In Persian literature, the Epic of Shahnameh brings up, some astonishing events that might be considered as the main source of *magical realism*. In the Epic, Rostam is a warrior that can do anything, from the most important to the least. Dr. Beatriz Salas de Rafiee the cultural staff of the Embassy of Venezuela in Tehran and the Spanish translator of Shahnameh explains that

...in the Shahnameh, Mahnucher kingdom lasted 120 years, and the Fereyidun's, 500 years. Zahak whose shoulders were kissed by the devil whereupon two snakes grew and the snakes craved human brains for food amid the indifference of his court sycophants. The bird Simorg speaks to the hero Zal on a very loving and familiar way, because it adopted him since he was a child, or when King Khosro sees the present reflected in a cup and other countless examples. There comes a time that for the reader, at first surprised, all these stories start to seem normal, especially when they are mixed with the important social demands like when the blacksmith Kaveh presents his demands to King Zahak.¹¹

In GGM's writings, he illustrates the setting and explores the characters and describes the cultural events of the period. The narrator, keeps narrating about everything from the least important events to the most important ones. *Love in the Time of Cholera*, published in 1985, was Marquez's first book after winning the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1982.

Love in the Time of Cholera, as noted above, mainly narrates a love triangle between Florentino Ariza, his beloved, Fermina Daza, and her husband, Dr. Juvenal Urbino. The first chapter deals with the concept of death, particularly Dr. Urbino's. The story describes Fermina's father's utmost effort to prevent his daughter from the continuation of a long-distance romance that seemed likely to end in marriage. In the earlier chapters, Florentino Ariza is a telegraph messenger and an illicit child who has been raised by his mother. After two years of letter writing during their long-distance relationship, Fermina's father disagreed with their marriage and made her reject Florentino.

¹⁰ Adapted from, Gabriel García Márquez, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gabriel_Garc%C3%ADa_M%C3%A1rquez.

¹¹. Beatriz Salas de Rafiee, July 29, 2014. Power of literature in the universal dialogue of nations. The Shahnameh or Book of Kings of Ferdowsi, as an example of ethics and nationalism. In, Michael Prosser blog, <http://www.michaelprosser.com/2014/07/dr-beatriz-salas-de-rafiee-power-literature-universal-dialogue-nations-july-29-2014-post-2090/>.

When Fermina was 21 years old, her beauty, chastity, and personality absorbed Dr. Juvenal Urbino; a well-educated physician who had just completed his education in France and returned home to improve the people's life condition. In this novel he is an ambassador of progress and culture of the west, he was not only educated but also religious and Liberal. His wealth absorbed the people, who respected him for his unique character and personality. The mentioned reasons were not enough for Fermina to love him but as her father was fond of Dr. Urbino's character and especially his wealth, insisted on the marriage with the help of the church that actually threatened Fermina to comply. So, she helplessly and reluctantly accepted the marriage.

Dr. Urbino, whom Fermina was not happy with, was strict and serious and had some health problems. Fermina's two pregnancies happened in France while they were far from the offensive family of Dr. Urbino. Fermina was a faithful and virtuous wife, although not religious. Dr. Urbino betrayed her once, and was ashamed of what he had done, as he was a religious man.

When Dr. Urbino died, Florentino, who had remained single, repeated his request again and claimed his faithfulness. Fermina's rejection had created a sort of obstinacy that he had channeled into lust and unrestrained habits, though he was determined to improve his life condition to marry Fermina after Dr. Urbino's death. Florentino immorally endured the lovers' separation. Finally, Florentino and Fermina get back together, at the ages of 75 and 72 respectively, one year after Dr. Urbino's death. The final chapter describes their love affair on a ship that took them to eternity.

The story is rich in descriptions, and indirectly criticizes the political issues that make the Colombians lose faith in God. The Cholera outbreak's number of victims rises rapidly, and love in the novel is compared to this epidemic disease. The story suggests that love might seem a solution to existing problems.

Florentino falls in love with Fermina but their plans for marriage are stopped by her father. When Florentino accepts the fact that, he cannot have Fermina as his wife, he falls in love with numerous numbers of women of all ages and classes to forget his sad experience. He feels inferior to Urbino and even waits for his death to finally marry Fermina. Meanwhile he tries to forget the humiliation by having false connection with the women who have problems in their personal life. So, love becomes just a means by which he forgets the problems and hardships to get rid of thinking about financial and political problems. Florentino, never involves himself in politics or religion. For him the only goal is having Fermina and tries his best to improve his financial life condition. The book begins with the death of Jeremiah de Saint-Amour and finishes with the death of the two lovers. The theme of love and death is mentioned all through the novel in one way or another.

What inspired Marquez to write the novel was his parent's marriage. As he explains in an interview:

The only difference is [my parents] married. And as soon as they were married, , they were no longer interesting as literary figures. The love of old people is based on a newspaper story about the death of two Americans, who were almost 80

years old, and met every year in Acapuloc. They were out in a boat one day and were murdered by the boatman with his oars. Garcia Marquez notes, "Through their death, the story of their secret romance became known. I was fascinated by them. They were each married to other people (Bell-Villada, pp. 9-23).

The language of the story is poetic and at the beginning it reads; "The words I am about to express: They now have their own Crowned goddess," (Marquez, 1988). To Florentino, Fermina is The Crowned goddess. LTC is an image of life with repetitions and descriptions bringing the readers to a world of reality and labyrinth. Marquez, says, "I am a poet in my novels," and the sentences are expressed in poetic and metaphorical forms. You will find in the Grossman translation of Marquez (Marquez, 1985) examples of these forms in pages 19, 64, 119, 139, 142, 148-149.

The novel is the story of a lifelong process, and as such, it explores the cultural, social, historical and geographical issues of Colombia in late 19th and early 20th century. The concept of love in general brings a unity between this book and everyone's philosophy of life; as every aspect of human activity is derived from love. Marquez has been inspired by his parents' marriage, his grandmother's unusual stories, and his grandfather's view on politics, in addition to his own observations that have given life to this novel. Marquez makes it clear that there is not a unique definition of love; instead, it is romantic while being mostly elusive, yet both of these elements are based on physical desires.

Commentary on the Main Characters

Love in the Time of Cholera has many different characters who appear to be alone in one way or another. They are lonely in nature, despite being among people. For instance, Tránsito Ariza, Florentino's mother, has never had a husband. Lorenzo Daza, Fermina's father, has no wife, as Fermina, his wife, died when the protagonist Fermina was a six year old girl. She has been raised by her Aunt Escolástica who was single and lonely.

Florentino is the only child of a love union, who was raised as a fatherless child by his mother and remains single all through his life. Fermina is the only child of a loveless marriage and is brought up by Aunt Escolástica. Dr. Juvenal Urbino is the only son of his family, and even after marriage feels lonely, as his interests and beliefs are different from those of Fermina. Below are suggested pages in the novel which describe these characters:

Fermina. Fermina Daza is a woman of pride who never likes her tears to be seen by others; she is lonely and out of patience, as these examples show. From Marquez, 1985, page 136 reads, "She should dawdle in the bathroom, rolling her cigarettes in perfumed paper, smoking alone, relapsing into her consolatory love as she did when she was young and free in her own house, mistress of her own body." Or page 137 reads, "... but for several months she wept with mute fury without knowing why when she locked herself in the bathroom to smoke, and it was because she was crying for him (her father)...." Page 162 reads "... She cried only in rage, above all if it had its origins in her terror of culpability, and then the more she cried the more enraged she became, because she could never forgive her weakness in crying..." .

Florentino. Florentino Ariza has lived the life of a lonely male prostitute with six hundred twenty two entries of sexual love affairs with different women of all ages as a result of his ~~love~~ failure in love. He has no faith in Christ, he is jealous, with no “self-control,” and he doesn’t restrain himself from some immoral acts of lust and adultery. He knows that what he does is wrong, as though he never reveals these acts in public, but he doesn’t actually care about them. There are many examples of Florentino's behavior in pages 114-116.

In this story, Florentino is a symbol of a Godless person with no faith in Christ. He doesn’t recognize self-control as a fruit of the spirit, so his life is in vain. All of his actions are based on elusive love, lust, joy, and pleasure. He doesn’t use his poetic talent appropriately, instead being an opportunist, avenger, and deceiver. He still loves Fermina Daza in heart but pursues sexual relationships with women of all ages and different marital status. He is called an ‘errant nephew’ by his uncle. His actions demonstrate his life theory: “he allowed himself to be swayed by his conviction that human beings are not born once and for all on the day their mothers give birth to them, but that life obliges them over and over again to give birth to themselves.” (Marquez, 1985, p. 108) ¹²

Dr. Juvenal Urbino. Dr. Juvenal Urbino is an educated man who marries Fermina to follow the cultural values of his society and family. He has health problems all through his life and follows a set of religious rules (p. 10).

Some Final Comments on *Love in the Time of Cholera*.

In this novel, Marquez-openly criticizes the political and social issues of Colombia, including issues of gender, between 1880 and 1933 so deliberately that he motivates readers to become more curious about Colombia.

The narrative makes it clear that there is not a unique definition of love but many kinds of complicated and unpredictable ones, all of which are based on sex or lust. The end of the novel determines that age and time do not put an end to love, or lust.

In this novel, the cultural morals are not based on ethical principles, and the lack of faith leads the people to seek temporary pleasures. Love is implicitly compared with the epidemic disease of Cholera, that may make the people forget their frustrations

The Persian Literary Tradition

Persian literature has been influenced by 2 main streams: pre-Islamic-era Zoroastrianism (“Middle ages”) and the later ideas of the Islamic era, from the 7th century on, including the emergence of Islamism ideology in Iran. Both of these together have equally contributed to fashioning the present cultural atmosphere of Iran.

Literature portrays the cultural values of any nation, demonstrating the general identity of a people who live collectively in a certain place over a long period of time. The supreme leader

¹² The pages with no reference are from the translated English version of *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez, 1988. The address to the pdf format of the book is available in the reference.

of Iran explains, “Cultural values are the heart and soul of a people and they are the true definition of a nation. Everything is reliant on culture,” (Supreme leader’s speech, 2013).

Iranian cultural values have been influenced by Islamic morals whose concept of love is based on heavenly standards, along with devotion and virtue, and with no emphasis on materialistic principles. In this regard, earthly attractions are only temptations by which people are being tested. A good example in this regard is the story of Joseph in the Old Testament of the Bible and, known as Yusuf in the Quran. The cultural and religious backgrounds of Persians are influenced by the Quranic Surah of Yusuf (The Quran, 4:15,16). Joseph/Yusuf was tested by the temptations of Zulaikha, Potiphar’s wife, to be granted a higher divine position as a prophet.

Iran, as a Shi'a nation, respects the martyred religious figures who sacrificed their lives to prove their love for Allah. In classical and modern Persian literature, love goes along with virtue, devotion, and sacrifice. In Persian Literature, the concept of love has to be expressed in agreement with what Imam Hussein (Peace Be Upon Him) did to prove his obedience to Allah/God. So, a true lover must sacrifice his or her life to prove his or her true love. Based on Islamic ideology, emotional love is assumed to be wasted when it is directed not towards Allah, but towards something or someone else.

Persian culture is not in favor of physical love affairs apart from marriage. Virginity is the most important possession of a girl before marriage, and it plays the most fundamental role in the continuation of her future family life. Because of this belief, it is understandable, even expected, that a man might refuse to marry a woman he has already slept with, because her virginity is gone, even though it was lost to him.

In Iran, the notion of face [aberu] or how other people think about a person, surfaces itself in the care that one should give to [harfe mardom] ‘people’s talk’. People are continuously reminded of the consequence of their thoughts, behavior and appearance in terms of what others may say or think about them. This aspect of the schema of aberu is discussed in detail by Ahamadi and Ahamdi (1998:212), the notion of face is one of the most important concepts in Persian Culture. (Sharifian, 2007, p. 37)

To stress the value of virtue in Islam, it is necessary to mention that all of the divine beliefs assume adultery as a great sin. In some Islamic societies, people are stoned to death if found committing adultery, although the Holy book of the Quran doesn’t suggest that, and actually reads,

Those who commit unlawful sexual intercourse of your women - bring against them four [witnesses] from among you. And if they testify, confine the guilty women to houses until death takes them or Allah ordains for them [another] way. (The Quran 4:15).

Recently, in Pakistan, a Muslim mother of two children was stoned to death for having a cell phone (A young woman stoned to death, 2013). To bring the case into more consideration,

based on Islamic rules, a widow can't establish any love relationship with a man unless married to him either permanently or temporarily. Islam permits polygamy because illegitimate children have no official support in Iran or other Islamic nations. Based on the mentioned points, human love must be fulfilled after marriage to keep the family life secure and empower the national Islamic cultural values.

In the following sections, some forms of religious, classical and modern Persian literature demonstrating these values will be discussed.

A Quranic love story: The story of Joseph (Yusuf) and Zulaikha (the wife of Potiphar) in the Old Testament, Bible, and Quran

The value of virtue is expressed in the story of Joseph and Zulaikha in the Jewish, Christian, Islam traditions equally. In the Quran, the Surah of Yusuf reads [And she [Zulaikha], in whose house he [Yusuf] was, sought to seduce him. She closed the doors and said, "Come, you." He said, "[I seek] the refuge of Allah,... Indeed, wrong doers will not succeed." (The Quran 12:23).

"And she certainly determined [to seduce] him, and he would have inclined to her had he not seen the proof of his Lord. And thus [it was] that We should avert from him evil and immortality. Indeed, he was of Our chosen servant." (The Quran 12:24)

The mentioned verses emphasize on the importance of overcoming false emotional feelings. The rest of this Surah is about 'self-control'; it reads "He is the Hearing, the Knowing." (The Quran 12:34).

Joseph has been mentioned in more or less the same content in the Jewish and Christian tradition too. So, the story of overcoming temptation is the same in all of the religious sources.

So, there remains no doubt for the Iranian writers not to pen about what violates morals, otherwise their books will be banned by the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance that takes the liberty of observing and evaluating all of the writers' works.

Classical Persian Literature References

There are many works of classical Persian literature which show the idealized, spiritual love. One prominent example is the *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi, the oldest epic work of Persian literature; others include Nizami Ganjevi's and Fakhreddin Assad Gorgani's works, to name only a few.

The *Shahnameh* of Ferdowsi. The *Shahnameh* (The epic of kings) is an epic poem by the Persian poet Ferdowsi (Ferdowsi, 977-1010 A.D.), consists of 50,000 verses telling of the mythical and to some extent the historical past of the Persian Empire. Dr. Beatriz Salas Rafiee, of the Embassy of Venezuela in Iran, translator of the *Shahnameh* into Spanish, explained in an interview: "I focus on the point that in the *Shahnameh*, Ferdowsi has characterized the women

very strongly with noble capabilities.”¹³ In an article, she elaborates on the poem’s cross-cultural value:

Ferdowsi has brilliantly sealed the world literature and specifically the Spanish literature, from the book of chivalry “Amadis de Gaula” by Garci Rodríguez de Montalvo, through Cervantes to Gabriel García Márquez (Salas Rafiee, 2014).¹⁴

Shahnameh was written in the late 10th and, based on some references, in the 11th century by the Persian poet Abolghasem Ferdowsi. It is about the pre-Islamic kings of Iran in Persia. It has had a fundamental effect on the world literature. That means, 600 years before the work of Cervantes, Ferdowsi had composed Shahnameh and it was translated into Arabic in the 13th century, and many of its stories and legends went to Spain. Through the Spanish Andalus, they were incorporated into the literary repertoire of European romance language.

Ferdowsi spent over three decades on the book that was written in Persian at a time when Arabic was the main scientific and literary language of Iran. Dr. Salas the translator of Shahnameh into Spanish, believes that it has inspired many great authors of the world. Topics that we see in the old French chanson de geste, the Charroi de Nîmes, 13th century, appeared in the Shahnameh in the episode of conquest of the Sipend castle. The difference is that in the French work, the hero disguises himself as a wine trader and in the Shahnameh the hero does it while changing into a salt merchant. In Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet, the balcony scene is almost exactly similar to the scene of the wall in the romance of Zal and Rudabeh, almost 600 years earlier. The same scene has been repeated in the *Rapunzel* which is a German fairy tale written in the 19th century. Shahnameh has been translated into Arabic, Armenian, English, Danish, French, German, Japanese, Italian, Latin, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Turkish, Ukrainian, Urdu and recently Spanish

There are 62 *Romances*, 990 chapters, and some 60,000 rhyming verses in the Shahnameh. The two we will deal with here have been narrated from the pre-Islamic era. The traditional points of views that are reflected in these stories show that the love relationships have been include restrictions for the lovers. Here we bring up the romances of Zal and Rudaba, and Bijan and Manijeh.

Zal and Rudaba from the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi. In the Romance of Rudaba, it is clear that the communication of the lovers was not approved by the ancient Persian cultural values during the time of the Zoroastrians too. To make the claim more clear, first we do a review on this love story to give a better background to the readers

Based on Shahnameh of Ferdowsi, Rudaba is the princess of Kabul¹⁵ and later she married Zal who is a legendary Persian warrior in Shahnameh. Rudaba was with silvery

¹³ <http://www.michaelprosser.com/2014/07/mansoureh-sharifzadeh-tehran-iran-interview-professor-beatriz-salas-cultural-staff-embassy-venezuela-tehran-july-27-2014-post-2089/>.

¹⁴ <http://www.michaelprosser.com/2014/07/dr-beatriz-salas-de-rafiie-power-literature-universal-dialogue-nations-july-29-2014-post-2090/>.

shoulders and long black tresses. Her mouth a pomegranate blossom, her lips are cherries and her eyes are like narcissus and her lashes are as black and long as raven's wing. So, the natural beauty of Rudaba is beyond words. One day that Zal was passing by the wall of the castle where Rudabah resided, he saw her sitting in the balcony and fell in love with her. Zal consulted his advisors over Rudaba and Rudaba fell in love with him too. Based on the cultural regulations she was not permitted to have any communication with Zal. Finally with the permission of her maids, Rudaba helped Zal to climb up the wall of the palace with the aid of her long hair and they talked together. Finally Rostam persuaded Rodaba's father to give them the permission of marriage and the result was the birth of Rostam who was the strongest legendary warrior of Persia. In Shahnameh such extraordinary acts take place that Dr. Beatriz Salas thinks Shahanameh is the first reference for the *magical realism*.

In her article, "Power of literature in the universal dialogue of nations, The Shahnameh or Book of Kings of Ferdowsi," she explains,

For me, Ferdowsi masterfully uses in the epic the technique that mixes up the reality with the fantasy. In Magical realism, Márquez applies it in the contemporary novel, adapted to the Latin American mood and world. And in more recent works that are having an incredible success, like in "Game of Thrones" by George RR Martin, we see the same resource of using the universal concept of dragons, for example, in a plot that seems historical. But what is incredible is that in Ferdowsi's, a thousand years ago, the dragon has more personality, it talks to the hero Rostam and is not limited to breathe fire out of his mouth. (Salas de Rafiee, 2014).

Bijan and Manijeh. Bijan and Manijeh is a love story in **Ferdowsi's Shahnameh**. Bijan was the son of, a famous Iranian knight during the reign of Kai Khosrow, the Shah of Iran, and Banu Goshasp, the heroine daughter of Rostam. Bijan falls in love with Manijeh, the daughter of Afrasiab, the king of Turan and the greatest enemy of Iran. In the Romance of Bijan and Manijeh, love has been condemned and the marriages must take place under a certain condition. To give a deeper description of the love story it is necessary to go into more details. Bijan who is a great warrior fights the boars that had invaded the land of the Armenians. He successfully makes them return to their lairs. While coming back to his own territory, in the garden in Turan, by the Caspian sea he accidentally meets Manijeh and they fall in love. Since their parents are enemies to each other, Afrasiab get mad and exiles her daughter from the palace and throws Bijan into a deep well. So they both are forced to spend their time in the wilderness. Meanwhile Manijeh secretly visits Bijan at the mouth of the well and brings him food that she begged from

¹⁵ Now Kabul is the capital of Afghanistan which is in the neighborhood of Persia, but in ancient times it belonged to Persia and several times it was conquered by the Persian rulers. For instance in the 6th century it was conquered by the Iranians and in 1736 it was conquered by Nadershah Afshar for the last time. After his assassination in 1747, Ahmad Shah Abdali became the ruler of his own empire and later it was known as the new Afghan Empire. (adapted from Kabul History, 2012 Afghanistan-Culture.com).

townspeople. Finally, Bijan sends secret messages to Rostam to help him. On the other hand, Bijan's father; Kei Khosrow, the Shah of Iran, looks into his Crystal Cup, and sees Bijan trapped inside a well in the land of Turan. He encourages Rostam to help Bijan. Rostam enters the land of Turan as a merchant and with the help of Manijeh discovers Bijan's well and Rostam rolls the rock off the mouth of the well using his superhuman strength and pulls Bijan to safety. Bijan and Manijeh escape into Iran. When Afrasiab becomes aware of the condition, declares war against Iran. The skies turn dark from the dust of the battle field while trumpets and crashing cymbals signify the attack of the Iranian cavalry. Turan is defeated, and Afrasiab is forced to return home without his daughter and in shame.¹⁶

The works of Nizami Ganjavi. Nizami Ganjavi (1141 to 1209) is considered the greatest romantic epic poet in Persian Literature. His most famous love stories are Khosrow and Shirin and Layla and Majnoon.

Khosrow and Shirin (1177-1180). Khosrow and Shirin is a story of pre-Islamic era of Persia. "The original Persian account, which is found in the great epic-historical poems of Shahnameh, is based on a true story that was further romanticized by Persian poets. *Khosrow and Shirin* recounts the story of king Khosrow's courtship of Princess Shirin, and vanquishing of his love-rival, Farhad..." (Nizami, 2009).

Layla and Majnoon. The love story of Layla and Majnun (1192), a tale of Arabic origin, was rewritten by Iranian poet Nizami Ganjavi, in the 12th century. It is a typical Iranian love story with a completely different trend towards love as the lovers helplessly remain faithful to each other. The lover runs mad and the beloved dies of sorrow. In the following lines, a brief summary of the story is given.

Qays who was a poor man fell in love with Layla whose father was mighty. Qays or Majnoon, soon began composing poems about his love for her, mentioning her name often. His unself-conscious efforts to woo the girl caused some locals to call him Majnun (madman). When he asked for her hand in marriage, her father refused as it would be scandal for Layla to marry someone considered mentally unbalanced. Soon after, Layla was married to another man. When Majnun heard of her marriage, he fled the tribe camp and began wandering the surrounding desert. Finally Layla died and Majnoon remained next to her grave, until he dies and was buried there too. (Nizami, Layla and Majnoon).

Surprisingly, there are some similarities between this story and *Love in the Time of Cholera*. In both of these stories, the male lovers are poets and in both cases, their beloveds are forbidden from the marriage by their fathers. But the difference occurs in the lovers' reactions. Unlike Majnoon, when Florentino is rejected, he tries to improve his life condition while being embroiled in an indulgence of earthly affairs. On the other side, Layla goes through a sad marriage and finally died of separation (from Majnoon) but Fermina makes herself involved in a natural life process with all of its ups and downs.

¹⁶ Adapted from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bijan_and_Manijeh.

Layla and Majnoon is a tragic story of undying love, much like the later *Romeo and Juliet*.¹⁷ It can also be assumed to be a “Virgin Love” story. The lovers never get married or engage in any acts of physical love. They suffer as they are sentenced to separation, and only in death could they be joined together.

Vis and Ramin. This epic was composed in poetry by the Persian poet Asad Gorgani in 11th century. The story dates from Pre-Islamic Persia. The story is about Vis, the daughter of Shahru and Karen, the ruling family of the Western part of Iran, and Ramin, the brother to Monikan, the King of Marv in Northeastern Iran. Monikan sees Shahru in a royal gala, wonders at her beauty, and asks her to marry him. She answers that she is older than she looks and is already married, but she promises to give him her daughter if a girl is born to her (Davis, 2008).

Further, it should be said that, when Shahru gives birth to her daughter, Vis, she sends her to a nanny. At the same time, nanny is raising another boy, Ramin, who is the brother of Monikan, and is exactly the same age as Vis. When Vis reaches adolescence, she returns to her mother, who marries Vis to her brother. The marriage remains unconsummated because of Vis' menstruation, which by Zoroastrian law makes her unapproachable. When Monikan finds out about the marriage, tries his best to call off the marriage. Afterwards, Vis refuses Monikan's request. As a result Monikan leads an army against Viru, Vis's father, and in the process suffers a defeat. Still, he sends messages to Vis that rejects his offering proudly. On the other hand Ramin who consults his brother is already in love with Vis. However, Monikan's other brother Zard suggests bribing Shahru as a way of winning over Vis. Mobad sends money and jewels to Shahru and bribes her to gain entry to the castle. He then takes Vis away, much to the chagrin of Viru.

After some battles, Monikan marries Vis, but finally he finds out that she is in love with his brother, Ramin. Monikan demands that Vis prove her chastity by undergoing trial by fire. It is after different adventures, and after several years, when Monikan is killed by a boar, that Vis and Ramin come back to Merv, which was located on the historical silk road, and Ramin sits on the throne as the king and marries Vis. Ramin reigns for 83 years. In the 81st year Vis dies and Ramin hands over the kingdom to his eldest son with Vis and goes and mourn on Vis' tomb for 2 years, after which he joins her in the afterlife.

The above examples of Zal and Rudaba, Bijan and Manijeh, Khosrow and Shirin, Layla and Majnoon and finally Vis and Ramin imply that, since ancient times love stories have been described to be in harmony with the Iranian/Islamic cultural morals, meaning that some facts can be explored about the ancient Iranian people, especially the women. These stories show that:

- 1- Girls have had the freedom of choice about their future husbands. A freedom that was not gained easily but with thoughtful acts and patience.
- 2- Family restrictions banned the communication between different genders.

¹⁷ Adapted from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romeo_and_Juliet.

- 3- Whatever the lovers were doing have been along with consulting some of the family members or accompanies. So, they were not making independent decisions about whom they loved.
- 4- Love has been the base of any marriage.
- 5- The lovers, were trying their best to reach the goal and marry whoever they loved.
- 6- Except for Layla and Majoon, all of the other lovers suffered and persisted to reach the goal and make the marriage. Layla, was helplessly engaged in a marriage that was against her will, but she could not endure and was tortured because of the separation and lost her life. So, it could be said that death was better for her than living with a man whom she didn't love. She died of sorrow.
- 7- Marriage has been the case not a love affair along with lust and free of social moral standards.
- 8- Girls or beloved are dignified, as they did their ultimate efforts to reach the goal.

Modern Persian literature references

Since the 7th century, Iran has been the land of the greatest polymaths, philosophers, scientists, scholars, poets and writers. Many of whose works remain as the most important records of human progress even to this day. A few of them can be named as Avī Cenna (11th Century), Hakim Omar Khayyam (11th Century), Mansoor Al Halluja (9th Century), Nasir Khusraw (11th Century), Muhammad ibn Zakariyā Rāzī (10th Century), Abū Bishr 'Amr ibn 'Uthmān ibn Qanbar Al-Biṣrī and some more that can't be included in this little article. They all have recorded their works either in Persian or Arabic as being the language of science in the old era of Persia.

Regarding the Literature, some of the greatest classical poets have been Hafiz, Sa'di, Ferdowsi, and others. The writings and stories of all sorts, either social, historical, romance, advices had mainly been in the language of poetry. Then the prose had to be rewritten from the content of the poems as what happened about the Shahnameh of Ferdowsi "...The oldest surviving work of Persian literary criticism after the Islamic conquest of Persia is Muqaddame-ye Shahname-ye Abu Mansuri, which was written in the Samanid period. The work deals with the myths and legends of Shahname and is considered the oldest surviving example of Persian prose. It also shows an attempt by the authors to evaluate literary works critically.'¹⁸

Since the last one hundred years ago, some great numbers of stories have been written in Persian, although none of them are merely love stories. Iran has always been a place of political strife, so the main concern of the writers has been to pen the political issues, while considering the Islamic morals. They mainly refer to the content of the Holy Book of Quran and the Ahasdith (Sayings) of the prophet Mohammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in addition to the sayings of the religious leaders all through the history of Islam. In Islam emotional feelings have a special place and should remain as secret and hidden. They should only be dealt with as the most personal human affair while being the most important and sacred need.

¹⁸ Adapted from, Persian Literature, http://www.iranreview.org/content/Documents/Persian_Literature.htm.

A Four volume collection of 'One Hundred Years of Fiction Writing of Iran' by Hassan Mirabedini, covers a period of one hundred years of Fiction writing in Persia from 1254/1875 to 1374/ 1975. Its last volume has been published by Nashre Cheshme/ Cheshme publication in 1384/ 2005. This source doesn't devote any of its named sections to love stories, as the love stories are always in the margins of the categorized social issues instead.

In the mentioned source hundreds of writers have been named and their works have been critically looked at. Mirabedini, doesn't devote any section to Mostafa Mastoor (1965-) as he has only published his first novel, "Kiss the Lovely Face of God" in 1379/ 1989 that is five years after Mirabedini's survey. The Bozorg Alavi (1904- 1997), Ali Mohammad Afghani (1925 -), Shahriyar Mandanipoor (1957 -) and numerous number of other novel writers have been mentioned in this stunning reference. Mirabedini mentions *The Deceived Stars* (Setaregane Faribkhorde) written by M. F. Akhoondzadeh / Mirza Fatali Akhundov (1812 - 1878) as the first Iranian novel in 1253 / 1875. (Mirabedini, 1st Volume, P. 20).

Bozorg Alavi's Cheshmhayash. (1952; tr. by John O'Kane as "Her Eyes," 1989); Bozorg Alavi (1904-1997) was a leftist writer and one of the most noted Persian novelists of the 20th century, whose works were banned in Iran from 1953 to 1979. In the following lines, a description of the novel is given.

Sharifzadeh had read this novel when she was a youngster of sixteen years old . She read it as a love story and an attempt for a lover who looked for his beloved based on her eyes. In Iranian cultural and literal values, the eyes of a woman mean a window to her inner soul and heart, which is the seat of emotion. In Persian literature when someone is in love with the eyes of a woman means, he desires for her uniqueness. As she enjoyed reading that story she was curious to see how the story would come to an end, and if the lover would be able to find the beloved or not.

In an essay Sharifzadeh wrote, "One hot summer afternoon, lying down on my bed reading 'Her Eyes' by Bozorg Alavi, mother came and said, "Ms. X has sent a message and asked for our positive reply for your marriage with his son, Mr. Hossein." Ms. X and her daughters were one of the distant relatives who always attended the assemblies. For a second I went numb: I was 16 and a high school student. I anxiously replied, "No, No, I don't want to marry. " Then I pulled the sheet over my head and repeated that again. "She is not ready for any marriage, leave her on her own." My brother who was a Civil Engineer university student said."¹⁹ (Prosser, et al., 2013, p. 420)

Cheshmhayash revolves around the portrait of an unknown woman, entitled "Her Eyes," painted by a famous artist, Mākān, a key figure of the underground opposition in the latter years of Reza Shah's reign (1925-1941), who has died in exile. Some critics hold that Alavi's portrayal of Makan might have been based

¹⁹ Sharifzadeh,M. (2012), The same Cultures don't Bring the Same Interests: My Cultural Story, <http://www.michaelprosser.com/2012/04/mansoureh-sharifzadeh-tehran-the-same-cultures-dont-bring-the-same-interests-my-cultural-story-april-10-2012-post-438/>.

in part upon Kamal al- Molk (d. 1938) renowned painter of the late Qajar and early Pahlavi era. (Mirabedini, 1998, I, pp. 428-9; Hillmann, p. 299)

"Her Eyes" is structured similarly to a framed painting, in which there is another story within main story. The narrator of the frame story is the assistant principal of an art college, who tries to unravel the secrets that surround the life of Makan, and the mystery that emanates from the eyes of the woman that strikes him most. He does not rest until he meets the owner of the eyes, Frangis, an educated woman of aristocratic background." (Alavi-Bozorg).

Ali Mohammad Afghani's works. Ali Mohammad Afghani, born in 1925, is one of the greatest contemporary writers in Iran. He is the author of many novels that portray Iranian cultural values. Two of his best known works are *Lady Ahou's Husband* written in 1962 (Shohar-e Ahoo Khanoom); and *Happy People of Qarehsou Valley* written in 1966 (Shadkamane Dareh Quarasu).

In the two mentioned novels, Afghani's main purpose is to solve the family issues of the early 20th century of Iran. Both of them demonstrate the concept of love in a *romantic* style while considering the cultural values of sacrifice, devotion, and separation. In the first one, he describes a forbidden love that leads to polygamy, which creates an unsafe family atmosphere. Based on the Islamic rules, a man can have four wives, and Shi'a can practice temporary marriages too. Personally, Sharifzadeh thinks that polygamy is not a correct act to do but as Islam orders, it should be accepted. The mentioned point doesn't mean that the former wife accepts it, as no woman likes her husband to choose another woman for his life. The fact is that, in Iran, only a small number of men may do that. Anyhow, it is not what the women like or approve. Ali Mohammad Afghani brought up the issue to draw the attention to the bad effect of polygamy on the thought and life of the women. Although, the mentioned novel, describes love in the most attractive way, it criticizes one of the rules of Islam, implicitly. Miran, falls in love with Homa, she is his desired woman while he likes his own wife too. But it is the matter of heart, the matter of emotion not the notion of rational domain. Ali Mohammad Afghani feels sad for the women whose husbands engage in this practice.

Lady Ahou's Husband, published in 1962, demonstrates the happy family life of a religious and wealthy baker, Seyyed Miran Sarabi, a 50-year-old man and his wife, lady Ahou, a very virtuous and hardworking woman. They have 4 children in Kermanshah in 1313/ 1935. Suddenly, the presence of Homa changes Seyyed Miran's ordinary life that was calm and happy. Homa created a lot of problems for Seyyed Miran. He lost his wealth and job as well as his face. The love didn't bring him comfort and it was not a good experience for him. Homa was a deceiver and left Seyyed Miran with a most bitter memory.

"*Lady Ahou's Husband* was written between 1953 and 1958, while Afghani was a political prisoner. The novel depicts the appalling life of Iranian women in that era and condemns the destructive effect of polygamy," (Afghani, 1962).

Happy People of Qarehsou Valley was published in 1966. There are some similarities

between this novel and *Love in the Time of Cholera*. It portrays a pure love of the only daughter of city's wealthiest landowner, Sarvenaz, with an eighteen year old boy, Bahram, from a poor family.

While Sadegh Hedayat (1903–1951), the well-known Iranian writer, with his most famous story, 'The Blind Owl,' demonstrates the notion of melancholy love in many of his works, (Sharifzadeh, 2013), Ali Mohammad Afghani pens love in the most beautiful and realistic style while bringing social problems up too.

The two mentioned novelists, have written their love stories in the most effective way based on the cultural Iranian values and they have not gone beyond boundaries. Ali Mohammad Afghani, relies on love to bring up social problems. Sadegh Hedayat relies on melancholy love to bring up social problems too. Although, in *The Blind Owl*, a story set in the late Qajar and early Pahlavi era in the heart of Tehran, Hedayat deals with some sexual episodes, the Iranian reader understands that it is a melancholy love. The reader's emotional feelings never surface and physical feelings are never empowered. The scenes indicate a mad personality who is in love with his own wife; a wife who likes to communicate with the ugliest and oldest man but never likes to sleep with her own husband. In the LTC, the writer deals with sexual affairs in order to simply portray love which is approved in some nations and cultures but not a cultural atmosphere's as that of Iran or any other Islamic nation.

R. Etemadi

A writer whose works have been considered vulgar for different reasons both before and in the early years after the victory of revolution in 1979, is R. Etemadi (1936) who wrote more than 40 novels. Before the revolution of 1979, his novel, 'The Residence of the Area of Sorrow' that in Persian is 'Saakene Mahalleye Gham' was banned during the Pahlavi Regime in 1964, as it explored the disastrous lives of the whores who were collectively living in one of the areas of Tehran called the New Town / Shahre Now, in the most terrible and embarrassing condition with poverty and disease. The Pahlavi regime banned his book as the book brought up a painful reality about the women. The book contained realistic descriptions of the life of the whores. The Regime didn't want the reality of the terrible condition be heard by the people.

After the revolution his writings were banned as they were love stories that exposed the cultural values of the west. Finally in 1997 with the election of President Mohammad Khatami, R. Etemadi found another chance to write and publish his novels but with a different name; Mahdi Etemadi. One of his books 'The Blue side of Love' which in Persian is 'Aabiye Eshgh' was published in 1378 / 1997. The book is about an earthly love mixed with Mysticism. He chose another style to be able to connect earthly love to heavenly love, in a hope of being accepted in the religious atmosphere of the Iranian post revolution era.

Mostafa Mastoor's works. Mostafa Mastoor, born in 1965, is an Iranian writer, translator, and researcher. He is a major writer of Iran today, and his writing style has been affected by a North American Movement based on Iranian Culture. His works can be thought of as reflecting the vast Persian literature on the topic of love. The authors will summarize his work in more detail here to give the reader a more compelling view of modern Iranian thought on love, and serve as another point from which to view *Love in a Time of Cholera*.

Virtue, sacrifice, devotion, and separation are the main points of all of his writings. The narrator of his love stories respects the purity of the nature of the beloved and adores her not merely because of her beauty but also as a result of the lover's unknown sentiment. It means, the lover never knows the exact reason for his desire for the beloved. A lover explains if you know why you love someone, it is not 'love' but it is 'like'. In Persian there are two phrases for loving someone; like and love. Like means you love someone by reason. One can count reasons for why he likes the woman. But Love is along with no reason. It is not rational and just a feeling which is not based on any logic. Love, Life, God, and Grief convey the main concept of his writings. Mastoor's short stories' readers

"... are expected to take an active role in the creation of a story, to choose sides" based on oblique hints and innuendo, rather than reacting to directions from the writer. The characters in minimalist stories and novels tend to be unexceptional involve the readers in the process of assumption and imagination to hypothesize the main stream of the novel. (Literary Minimalism).

In the collection of Mastoor's short stories, "I am Omniscient/Man Danaye Koll hastam" (1383/ 2004), in 'Several Authentic Narratives about Susan/Chand Ravayate mo'tabar Darbareye,' (Susan Ghoghnoos, 1391/2012, p. 7), Kiyanooos is a man who plans an affair with a whore called Susan, but he falls in love with her. Her beauty makes him astonished; he writes love poems for her. He finally leaves her without ever having sex with her. This awakens Susan and she welcomes a new stage of life. The narrator chooses a verse from the Bible to open his love story about Susan. This is what he quotes from the Bible, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" (Mark 8:36 – King James Bible)²⁰

For Mastoor, the concept of love is so sacred that the beloved should not be assumed as a worldly object. In "What explains to thee who Maryam is?" which is one of the stories in *I am Omniscient/ Man Danaye Koll hastam*, for the character Amir, Maryam is so sacred that he never ever touches even her hand.

Mastoor dedicates "The story of Love without L and O and Dot" to "all of the women" and in the story's epigraph refers to these women as 'The lonely residence of the bright and meaningful side of life.' The reason for his dedication is that in many cases women are oppressed. Men rule over women and women must accept their stance. In this context, Iran is a patriarchal nation. Mastoor believes, women are lonely, they are helpless, and they must accept the rules.

Sharifzadeh believes, in the Iranian family life of the women, some cases have become an unchangeable part of Iranian women life and that's what they have accepted generation after generation. A woman is advised to be patient. She is advised to endure and live for her children. A woman must remain faithful otherwise no law may support the woman for instance after divorce. The existing rules, may somehow be good or in some case painful. That's why Mastoor

²⁰ Mastoor does' mention the main source, Sharifzadeh found out the Bible as the source while translating the Farsi verse into English for this article.

dedicates his book to all of the women, not only his mother or wife or sister. To all of the women collectively. In his mind, a woman sacrifices herself including her freedom and she devotes herself for the happiness and comfort of her family life.

Mostafa Mastoor is a legend and creates the most memorable love stories with the concept of love that remains pure and heavenly in the way idealized by the Iranian cultural perspective.

The Stature of Women in Mostafa Mastoor's writing:²¹ For Mastoor, love is always accompanied by failure, depression, and separation (Sharifi, p.21). The concept of love has always been accompanied by impossibilities in the Iranian cultural, literal, philosophical, and artistic values. In Mastoor's style it is the same (Sharifi, p. 23). Even as far back as the 11th century, depression was described in reference to love.

Avicenna, the Iranian scientist and physician of the 11th century, described the love disorder as an obsessive disorder resembling severe depression in which the patient is overloaded with imaginary figures and obsessive thoughts that must be cured (Shoja, 2007).

In the collection "Love on the pavement," Mastoor deals with love by exploring different sorts of love, i.e. Platonic vs. worldly love. But we notice that, they have a superhuman and mythological tone too. They are spiritual love (Sharifi, p. 24).

In "The Nights of Yalda," the author deals with letter writings and expresses the lover's feelings in the letters while the lover is in the war front. The absence of the beloved makes the lover worried. It is necessary to mention that the lover is the husband of the wife but they are far away.

In "The Green Afternoon," the lover looks for a beloved that doesn't exist. In mind he has the image of a girl that he has seen in the town and asks a painter to draw it, but it can't be done as the girl is beyond the imagination of the painter. He continues asking several painters to do so. Love and obsession go together; the more he looks for a better drawing of the beloved, the less he finds. In "Mahtab" the story is the same. (Sharifi, p. 25).

In Mastoor's writings love is always accompanied by sadness. Love demonstrates a forbidden barrier that the people want to pass, but they are always punished. The only solution seems to be not to enter the forbidden love. In the "Two eyes of the wet house of Love" (Do Cheshmeh Khaneye Khise Eshgh), love destroys social authority and even wisdom becomes lost and ruined. The punishment of love is madness, separation, and death (Sharifi, p. 26). In "Love on the pavement," love has no closure or conclusion, so this brings love to the stage of impossibility and separation. The stories explicitly show how the event of love brings sadness

²¹ This section is a translation of the selected articles of "An attempt on the sorrow's Circuit" (Sa'y Bar Madare Andooh). Translation of the whole articles from Persian to English have been done by Mansoureh Sharifzadeh. The mentioned book is in 397 pages, with 2 chapters. The chapters are composed of 36 articles. Eight of his novels are reviewed in addition to some general articles on all of his materials. So, the translation of such a book needs time and not any translator can do it easily. As far as it is known it has not been translated into English yet, if so I am not aware of and have not seen anywhere. (9/23/2014).

and sorrow, which gives actual pleasure to love. So love is equal to sadness and the happiness is in separation. As Homer (106) says: "We will never unite to become one" (Sharifi, p. 27).

In "The story of a man who sank knee-deep in grief" (Dastane Mardi ke ta Zanoo dar Andooh foro rafte bood), the story ends in disaster. The lover never marries the beloved, as the marriage is in opposition with love. Love must remain pure and ideal; marriage is a standard dictated by the social values and doesn't guarantee the continuation of love. He believes that in love affairs there must be a gap, even in marriage; the lovers must remain apart, as in "The stories of the Night of Yalda" (Dastanhaye shabe yalda), (Sharifi, p.28). Love should be a reflection of childhood innocence (Sharifi, p. 35). Sohrab Sepehri, the Iranian poet, writes, "for this rhythmical sorrow, what poems have been composed!" (Sharifi, p. 61).

Mostafa Mastoor was born in "Seft," which means zero in Persian. When he says this, he means he has been raised in the poorest area of Ahwaz, where there were no facilities and the only score that he can give to that place is "zero." He grew up in the slums of the most populated and poorest area of Ahwaz. There, he observed poverty and diseases in the era of the Monarchy of Mohammad Reza shah Pahlavi, the 1960s. As he explains,

I come from a big family, four sisters and three brothers. I am the fourth and the youngest son of the family. My childhood has been full of various events. My kindergarten was on the branches of the trees. My childhood was going here and there in the palm tree areas, swimming in Karun, chasing the dogs, running on the roofs of the houses and holding ourselves into the carriages (Sharifi, p.293).

He started reading books at the age of 10; he borrowed these books from the Institute for the Intellectual Development of Children and Young Adults (Kanoon – Parvareshe Koodakan and No Javanan). Since childhood he has thought very seriously about the stationeries, they were very important to him. Since 16 years of age he has been interested in philosophy, and by the age of 20, Arabic literature and philosophy had become very important to him. Then he was reading and analyzing the poems of Hafiz of Shiraz. Afterwards, Sohrab Sepehri's poems came into his attention.. He is the producer of a few short films, won awards on several occasions, and he is a poet and translator too (Sharifi, p. 294).

The frame work of Mastoor on "Love" is based on the ivy plant, or ashagheh, that goes around the thought of the beloved and finally vanishes and dissolves in her. The basis of his love is separation: the lover keeps away from getting united with the lover. Love is the voice of separation for him, a separation that swamps into ambiguity. In different places in his love poems, the reader will find the signs of Platonic and mythological love, and the readers know him with this characteristic (Sharifi, p. 295). In "Several authoritative versions" (Chand Ravayate Mo'tabar), a physics teacher falls in love with Kimiya, one of his students. One day when she doesn't attend the class, he becomes depressed. Once in her notebook he expresses his love; shortly after he asks her to erase the claim. In this way he wants to prove that he doesn't want to ruin the sacred element of the love which happens between them with earthly words. In the same story, Kasra tells Mahtab that he loves her, and when Mahtab asks him, "How much?" he sheds tears and says, "to the extent that I don't want to marry you" (Sharifi, p. 296).).

In "Disasters of a few deep wells" (Masa'ebe Chand Chahe Aamegh), when Niloofar takes the comb to brush her hair, opens the letter of Yusuf, it reads, "It is as if all of my cells collectively say, I love you. Sometimes I am afraid of this mad love. Sometimes I am frightened of carrying this love..."

*Love should only be drunk,
it should be felt, it should be kissed,
it should be uttered
without letting the beloved comprehend its meaning,
and the lover should burn and should go far away.
I swim in your eyes,
and I die in your hands.*

The narrator further on reads how the lover loves Sayeh, but prefers gazing at her hands rather than touching them.

In "Murdering," the lovers write letters and exchange ideas about Silinger, then they gradually express love. In this short story, wanted or unwanted distance exists. Distance and social and cultural obligations exist for both of them. Even when they express love, the young writers decisively emphasize the existing separation, and finally the reader doesn't understand why the relationship should be like that (Sharifi, p. 296). Mastoor is unique in creating such love conditions, but the insistency of the lover in creating distance creates a repeated question in the minds of the readers.

In the same story Mastoor demonstrates a lover whose beloved had been killed in a car crash, so he prefers to suffer, struggle, and endure instead of being involved in another tragic story. For him, what remains of the deceased lover is purity and honesty, which are the main morals in any love affair. He finally goes insane and is swamped in depression (Sharifi, p. 297).

The late Turkish Modern poet Orhan Veli Kanık writes, "Our fishermen don't sing collectively as the other fishermen of the stories, so the lovers of this nation are different from the other nations" (Sharifi, p. 298).

In the story of "Susan," we find a lover with a disability in creating a typical love affair with anyone. In this story, again distance and existing separation between the lover and the beloved is the central point. Short sentences don't establish complete and understandable meanings. He never wants to reveal his real feeling, that's why he uses short sentences. A vast soul as that of Susan is important for him, so he only restricts himself in any sort of relationship and actually love for him is not natural and complete. He even has problem with the word of *eshgh* (Love) and doesn't write it correctly and completely; he writes that only with one letter.

For him, the essence of love is so important that he cannot make love a complete and mature interaction. In his love affairs and relationships, imagination is the base. Further on he adds, "He had told Mahtab that, although it had been the first time he loved someone so deeply, he thought that his feeling had no relationship with love and other nonsense things like that.

In "Running in the field of the Land Mine" (Davidan dar Meydane Min, p. 42-43), he reads, "Love is a tiny, poor portion of life, no one should get close to that. Further on Mahan

reads, "Sir, I told him that no relationship can fill the hollow space of love." He continues, "I wonder, how can one be fond of someone without loving him/her?" For example, Parsa told Mahtab that he loved listening to her voice, and it was not important for him what sort of words she depicted, and just hearing her was enough. Parsa's love for Mahtab was odd (Sharifi, P. 300).

One of his bestselling books is *Kiss the lovely face of God*. In this book, Mastoor has brought up the theological and philosophical concept of love in its most authentic way in different layers of his story. This has made him look like a theologian. In the same story, some concepts of Platonic love are evident. There, Dr. Mohsen Parsa falls in love with Sayeh, and finally he commits a suicide.

In "**Sofiya**," we read about a carpenter that gives an end to his life because of the love of a woman named Sofiya. The carpenter actually falls in love with the voice of a woman whom he sometimes talks with over the phone. Finally the voice tells him that she will leave the city soon, forever, and they won't be able to talk with each other anymore. The carpenter commits suicide as he can't bear Sofia's separation. Later on, the truth was revealed that it had actually been the voice of a naughty boy that was teasing him (Sharifi, p. 301).

In the story of *Pork bones and the arms of the Lazar* (novel) 1383 (Ostokhane Khook and Dasthaye Joz), another abnormal love story is presented. It narrates the love of a university student of photography; Hamed, with Negar who resembles his fiancé Mahnaz.

The lovers of Mastoor's stories are all isolated, sad, devastated. They weave love with sorrow, and among those woven lines they remain alone. His interest in metaphysical love and non-spiritual love is at the center of the point. (Sharifi, p. 302).

Somewhere he has said that, he doesn't write for the literature experts but for the "ordinary people." This is a common trend in both Mastoor's and Marquez's writings. They both tend to be understood by the majority of the people. Mastoor says "I write for the people," Marquez is the same; he writes for the people to be understood by them. The only difference is that Mastoor demonstrates rare and spiritual loves.

"In Mastoor's philosophy, women are sacred and adorable. They are the only inhabitants of the bright and oppressed and meaningful side of life. In his view, in comparison with men, women are lovely and men are in need of them. He follows the pattern of the love legend of Layla and Majnoon who said my entire world was lost for love, so let our love take us to the hereafter." (Sharifi, p. 303).

A Deeper Look at the Stature of Women in Mastoor's writings. Mastoor highly values women in his stories. For him, they are sacred; he is a writer who is deeply concerned about the religious thoughts and ideas. In his works women play a key role and he has dedicated his works to all of the women.

Mastoor's dedication in full reads, "If there is any integrity in the weak and breathless words of this book, I dedicate all of them to the women who are the only inhabitants of the bright and oppressed side of the meaningful side of life. Unlike other writers, he doesn't dedicate his book to his mother or wife for creating a comfortable and warm atmosphere to enabled him to write; instead, he dedicates his writing to all women" (Sharifi, P. 360)

In "Several authoritative versions," Susan is a whore, but there is no difference between her and Mahraveh, Sayeh, Kimiya, Maryam, Mahtab and Arezoo, who are virtuous and decent lovers; In *Pork Bones and the Arms of Lazar* (1383/ 2004), Danial says, "The world is exactly like the meat of a rabbit"²²: to some extent eating is forbidden and to some greater extent eating is approved. All the corruption comes from men. "If there is anyone that doesn't accept my claim," he says, "they should read the history, to go through the statistics, or watch T.V. If there doesn't exist any woman, then love doesn't exist" (Sharifi, p. 361).

All of the male characters of Mastoor's stories, of any nature and position, look at the women from the same perspective: women find a divine stature in themselves or one another. He considers all women sacred, whether homemakers, students, or whores. Kiyanoosh just gazes at Susan in recognition of this divinity and never touches her.

In "Some Authoritative Narratives," Mastoor writes:

*At night,
When the Moon shines,
I ablute,
I choose the best words,
And climb to the top of the highest city building
And a thousand times, I write
Susan is the Moon
(Sharifi, p. 304)*

In his stories, we gradually see the women have or are given a metaphysical character. The writer imagines them completely free from earthly restraints, becoming finally a metaphysical illusion. They convert to idols; they become a combination of impossibility and romantic ideal. In all of Mastoor's stories, the men shape the women out of their minds as they wish to worship them as idols. Everything that the man seeks in his attempt to make a connection with God, which is not obtained, can be restored by the women in the story. Metaphysics finds a physical shape in these female characters.

"A Few Authoritative Narratives of Love" is about a physics teacher who falls in love with one of his students named Kimiya. Although he deeply loves her, he never directly tells her, as he thinks that Kimiya is sacred and should never be told but thought about. In this story, the narrator has a mono talk with himself so "You" is the narrative that is advising himself. The meeting or rendezvous that he has with Kimiya is on Sundays, so he talks about Sundays secretly, "Sundays for you is a piece of paradise that comes down from the sky once a week. It hails from the farthest galaxies, stays here to be looked at, and then returns to the paradise. For you Sundays are not the portion of time, in other words it becomes a stone that fills a space and weighs ..." (Sharifi, p. 365).

²² Based on the Islamic rules, eating the meat of rabbit is "Mobah," which means it is better not to eat unless you are really in need.

Women are not earthly characters, so they should only be worshiped. They are neither complex nor simple, they exist to bring the man's spirit and character into existence. In the next statement, "I" is the physics teacher and "You" is Kimiya; the beloved.

"I Swim in your Eyes and I Die in your Hands," further on he reads, "I wish I were a brick of your house, or a handful soil of your garden, or the interior door handles of your room to be touched one thousand times a day. I wish I were your heart or your lungs to bring your breath in me and out of me. I wish I were you, I wish you were me" (Sharifi, p. 366).

Mastoor places women in the highest human position; he wants to keep them away from any form of humiliation. In some of the classical stories, a woman has been portrayed as a hand of the devil and a symbol of satanic acts and a means by which Adam has come to the stage of sinful acts, but in Mastoor's stories, a woman is given spiritual and divine statue.

In Mastoor's writings, the lover reaches the beloved only after great effort. He falls in love with her and at the highest moments of his sentimental love relationship, decides to leave her. The beloved admits the lover's decision, either to stay or leave. So, it might seem that the beloved has a unreceptive role. Every decision is in the hands of the lover in this regard (Sharifi, p. 370).

To conclude, Mostafa Mastoor echoes any woman as the most sacred individual and blames the men for any exploitation and destruction. He thinks of women as the most innocent beings. In context, beyond their romantic roles, he thinks that women are neglected and are not treated respectfully in the society, so he tries to bring them into consideration and not to portray them as figures of sexuality. He does this in many cases by preventing the men from fulfilling their sexual desire through the women. Of course, the fact is that in Iran as the family is the most important core of the society and the statue of the fathers is into very strong perspective, men are always assumed as the responsible person for earning and raising the children. This mentioned point that the social roles have given men, makes them men responsible for what they have accepted about their marriage.

Commentary on Marquez. For Marquez, on the other hand, women are basically a means by which sexual desires may be fulfilled, and men take advantage of them. In return, the women have succumbed to this role and they themselves believe in accepting the men's decision to only force themselves to go through a life process to both fulfill their responsibility and having a joyful life too.

To bring the mentioned perspective into more comprehensible status, again I focus on Fermina Daza and Florentino Ariza's love condition. For instance, Fermina Daza is loved by Florentino Ariza while she goes through her own life process until her husband dies. And the final symbol of their love relationship is represented in the scene on the ship, where they are united physically, rather than spiritually, making love at their advanced ages. There is nothing wrong with that, but what I mean is that, their love has only been fulfilled by the sexual relationship.

What is understood from different character's including Florentino's mother's, women feel responsible for raising the children that are the product of a love relationship, but men are irresponsible in that case. The mentioned point can implicitly be acquired from what Dr. Beatriz Salas the cultural staff of the Embassy of Venezuela in Tehran, expressed in my personal interview with her. She said,

In Venezuela the role of mothers is more important than men. Mothers are responsible for their children and they earn their own living, so their role is very important. The role of women in education is higher than men. Women have very strong characters and feel responsible for their lives. Of course, in Venezuela illegitimate children create a lot of problems for the society but that's what it is. Of course the case belongs to low class. Lack of adhering to cultural values bring men to the state of irresponsibility. The family is not strong, as a result the society is not strong too. The mentioned points exist to some extent but cannot be generalized, though. Overall, traditionally, women feel more responsible for the family life."²³

Mostafa Mastoor has been able to portray his love stories in the present condition of an Islamic country by bringing to the fore the roles Islamic belief play in Iranian lives, showing that love should finally be devoted to the satisfaction of Allah, to bring righteousness to earthly love and all the related activities of any woman and man, who must "go straight to the path of Allah." Mastoor's philosophical view of love make his stories capable of being published in the present condition of Iran.

Shahriar Mandanipour's works. Shahriar Mandanipour, born in 1957, is an Iranian novelist who is currently living in New York. In his book *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* he narrates a love story against the background of political issues in Iran in 2009. The book was not permitted to be published in Iran as it did not respect the recommendation in this regard. To make ourselves more clear we should say that, the narrator focuses on one of the most sensitive and painful realities of the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance's rules. Of course now (2014), the mentioned point has been eliminated to some extent, means love and criticizing the recommendations. The reason is that president Rowhani always encourages the people and authorities to express their ideas and critical point of views.

As, we have not had any access to this book in Iran so far, we don't know whether it is in the market or not and we have just read about it in different web sites, we have to quote Saeed Kamali Dehghan to give more information about it to the readers. "In Mandanipour's novel, the ministry censor, Mr. Petrovich, named after the detective in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*, argues with the author about words and phrases that he wants them to be removed from the story on the grounds that they might sexually arouse readers, harm Islamic values,

²³ An Interview with Professor Beatriz Salas the Cultural staff of The Embassy of Venezuela in Tehran , July 27, 2014 Question No. 7. <http://www.michaelprosser.com/2014/07/mansoureh-sharifzadeh-tehran-iran-interview-professor-beatriz-salas-cultural-staff-embassy-venezuela-tehran-july-27-2014-post-2089/>.

endanger national security or ignite revolution.” (Saeed Kamali Dehghan on love and the censor)²⁴

Censoring an Iranian Love Story is a brilliant novel about the complexities of writing and publishing in Iran. It will help in further understanding of the frustrating and sometimes perilous situation of the book industry. *Censoring an Iranian Love Story* was translated into English and published in the United State in 2009.^{25, 26} The sources that directly tells about the publication of the book in the U.S. is this Persian Wikipeage²⁷ that stresses on the fact that the book has not been about to obtain a license from the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance to be published in Iran. The English translation was published in the U.S. in 3000 volumes, which has had a good market. Since then, it has also been translated into other languages, including German. The exact source reads in Persian:

سانسور یک داستان عاشقانه ایرانی

(Censoring an Iranian Love Story)

نام رمانی است به نویسندگی شهریار مندنی پور که به زبان انگلیسی منتشر شده است. این کتاب توسط انتشارات کناپف و با ترجمه سارا خلیلی با تیراژ ۳۰۰ هزار نسخه در ایالات متحده آمریکا منتشر شد

در این رمان که از شیوه متافیکشن یا دخالت نویسنده در متن استفاده شده، دو داستان در کنار هم روایت می‌شود؛ یکی داستان رابطه پسر و دختری به نام دارا و سارا و عدم امکان رشد این رابطه در ایران و داستان دیگر که حکایت مشکلات شهریار مندنی پور با سانسورچی کتابش است. این رمان که موفق به دریافت مجوز انتشار در ایران نشده به زبان‌های دیگری از جمله آلمانی هم ترجمه شده است.²⁸

In 2010, Sharifzadeh's colleague and she did a Persian translation of *The Instant Millionaire, A Tale of Wisdom and wealth*, 1990, by Mark Fisher for the Publication of 'Nasle Aftaab' that can be translated into English as "*The Generation of the Sun*" in Tehran. In the original copy, by New World Library, on page 25, the millionaire tells the young man,

²⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/aug/15/censoring-iranian-love-story>.

²⁵ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shahriar_Mandanipour#Bibliography.

²⁶ <https://one.overdrive.com/media/199146/censoring-an-iranian-love-story>.

²⁷ http://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1_%DB%8C%DA%A9_%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86_%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87_%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C.

²⁸ Adapted from:

http://fa.wikipedia.org/wiki/%D8%B3%D8%A7%D9%86%D8%B3%D9%88%D8%B1_%DB%8C%DA%A9_%D8%AF%D8%A7%D8%B3%D8%AA%D8%A7%D9%86_%D8%B9%D8%A7%D8%B4%D9%82%D8%A7%D9%86%D9%87_%D8%A7%DB%8C%D8%B1%D8%A7%D9%86%DB%8C

“I’ve got another idea,” he said. “How about a bet?” He took a coin from his pocket and bounced it up and down in the palm of hand. “Let’s play heads or tails. If I lose, I’ll give you the \$25,000 cash I have in my pocket. If I win, you give me the check.”

‘Bet’ or in Farsi ‘*shart Bandi*’, is considered an act of gambling in Islam. Before the Victory of the Islamic Revolution of 1979, the people practiced ‘head and tail’ by tossing coins, for fun. Based on the Islamic rules it is considered as gambling, as a result it is forbidden or Haraam. In addition to that, head and tail, should be translated into *Shir*=Lion or *Khat*=line as there is no other way for that to be interpreted into Persian. The Shir/lion created problem.



A five Rial coin of 1312 / 1933 - from Sekeha.com

To give a brief description of the coin designs during Qajar (1785 - 1925) and Pahlavi (1925 -1 1979) dynasty, it should be stated that: the coins were designed with the image of a kingdom crown at the top and a lion with a sword in hand and a Sun on the back on one side and on the other side, there was written the coin value number. However, with the victory of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1979, it became

necessary for the currency to find a new design. For the mentioned reasons, the Ministry of Culture and Islamic Guidance, removed all the 3 pages that included *coin*, *tail* and *bet*. This is the story of another censorship that was done on the Persian translation of *The Instant Millionaire* which in Farsi is ‘Millioner-e yek shabe’ (Nazari and Sharifzadeh, 1389/2010).

Final Comments on the Concept of Love in Persian literature

In looking at some of the major works in Persian literature, we have followed the theme of love through a number of stories. In the Epic of Shahnameh, we see the love stories of the classical period. Long stories like that of Nezami and Jami make up the base of these classical love stories. In the later period, the post-Islam era, Bozorg Alavi, Ali Mohammad Afghani, Mostafa Mastoor, Sadegh Hedayat, and Shahriyar Mandanipoor provide only a few examples of how writers are faithful to the norms of love story writing and consider the rules of virtue, separation, and devotion.. In more poetic terms, love is the dance of the soul that gives life and brings unity. It is an inseparable bridge between the lovers’ hearts. Mawlana²⁹ the well known Iranian poet of the 13th century writes;

*Love is the universal order, we are the atoms;
Love is the ocean, we are the drops.
Love has offered us a hundred proofs;
(Mawlana, Gazal/ Sonet No. 2: 25-28)*

²⁹ Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Balkhī, also known as Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī or Mawlānā, meaning *Our Master*, was a 13th-century Persian poet, jurist, theologian, and Sufi mystic.

Conclusion

The main aim of this short essay has been to compare the concept of love in *Love in the Time of Cholera* with that in traditional Persian literature. In *Love in the Time of Cholera*, love includes the physical relationship with romantic elements. In this context love is elusive. In the Persian literature love is romantic and sacred. Although, love can be elusive in the Persian context if it is not romantically requited, it is not elusive in a physical sense because love is not defined as a physical relationship.

In the *Love in the Time of Cholera*, the conceptual realization of love is due to the fulfillment of physical desires. In contrast, the concept of 'eshgh' in traditional Persian literature refers to the establishment of a link from 'Earthly love to Spiritual love' or 'Virtual love to Real love,' which should be devoted to the creator of the universe. In this regard the most profound concept hails the 'motherly love,' that's why the prophet of Islam reads, "*The Paradise is under the Steps of a Mother.*" This means that a mother should devote herself to her kids in order to be worth of enjoying the mercy of God hereafter. By bringing up the mentioned point, I mean, love is sacred and the most sacred concept in this regard is a motherly love which has the whole meaning of love, to the extent that the prophet of Islam approves it in the case of the motherly love which is the purest form of love. In Persian and Islamic perception, love is not something to be uttered, it needs devotion, sacrifice and suffering. One should sacrifice her /his own desires to prove his/her love to the beloved and the highest form of love is what the person ignores to become able to go to the straight path of Allah.

Gabriel Garcia Marquez is well familiar with the cultural, political and historical values of his society and his work aims to bring them into consideration. Love, or *eshgh*, plays a significant role in human dignity, so it is the main theme of much of everyday life. In a broader domain, love can create harmony and peace in general. Love as an emotional feeling can't be defined easily, but it shapes the strongest backbone of all of the human activities. What I mean is that, Love is a motif in doing anything and it is not restricted to human relationship and different sexes. If we love to do something for instance painting or music, we may become the most powerful painter or musician. When we do something based on our interest and love the outcome can be better.

To compare the points related to love and sex in LTC with that of Iranian Muslim perspectives, it should simply be said that talking about love and affection is accepted in Iranian culture, but talking about sex is forbidden; and the desire should never be mentioned as it is a personal need and/or part of an affair. Opposite sexes go through the process of sex, but one's experiences, nor the idea or practice of sex must never be spoken of to others. After marriage what is spoken of between husband and wife is private. To go into more details, the human organ is respected and it should never be revealed, either of the men's or women's. In contrast, what Marquez does is to talk about the beauty of the body and describes it openly. In LTC, Marquez compares Fermina's naked body with that of her cousin Hildebranda Sanchez. He describes every single detail of these young women's body (Marquez, 1985, p. 85).

A Muslim woman should cover her body and should keep it very personal, as it is the command of Islam and has been brought up in the holy book of Quran. In the Iranian love stories, the ultimate description of a woman's body belongs to the length of her hair, the narrowness of her waist or the beauty of her eyes even talking or describing the lips doesn't happen very often, except for comparing that with blossoms. In the Iranian cultural values, a woman is a symbol of virtue that gives birth to a new generation. The woman must remain pure and out of reach of the eyes and hands of the strangers, except for her husband to give birth to virtuous children. That's the role of Islam to encourage men and women to remain pure for the safety of the human dignity, if anything happens other than this the cultural invasion is blamed for it.

It is also acknowledged that the ancient Persian stories of romantic love found a similar expression in Europe. For example, Romeo and Juliet, and Rapunzel are two such stories in European literature that provided social guidance to the population. The expression of love in Europe and the U.S., first expressed as the ideals of romantic love, appear now compete with expressions of physical relationships and immodesty.

In some cultures the term Love is simply used to designate any motif that creates sexual excitement, while others attribute to it, deeper concepts. Hupka, et al; state "although the genetic and physiological bases of emotions may be similar in all human beings, talk about emotions may vary because of cultural scripting" (1996:249).

As our last words, Hafez of Shiraz³⁰ the greatest Iranian poet reads:

Found nothing more joyful than the sound of words of love,
In this turning merry-go-round that You rewind.
(Sonnet 178) *Blessings and Peace*

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³⁰ Khwāja Shams-ud-Dīn Muhammad Hāfez-e Shīrāzī, known by his pen name Hāfez (also *Hāfiz*; 1325/26–1389/90), was a Persian poet. His collected works are regarded as a pinnacle of Persian Literature and are to be found in the homes of most people in Iran and Afghanistan, who learn his poems by heart and use them as proverbs and sayings to this day. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hafez>.

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About the Authors

Mansoureh Sharifzadeh has been an English language teacher at the pre-university centers of Tehran from 1978 to 2009. She is an independent scholar with a frequent contributor to Professor Michael H. Prosser's website. She is the author of different published articles both in Persian and English. She has translated some books from English to Persian. Her recent book with Michael H. Prosser and Zhang Shengyong, is *Finding Cross Cultural Common Ground*, published in 2013 by Dignity University Press. Her forthcoming book is 'An Iranian journey from Self to Global Understanding' in 2015. Her main interest is in world peace and reconciliation of the nations with each other. In 2004, she was awarded by Seyyed Mohammad Khatami for the translation of *Lots More Tell Me Why* (Dean Publishing Co., 1991). Her connection with the second last president of Damavand College, late Professor D. Ray Heisey (1932–2011) in 2008, caused her to face fundamental changes in her perspective about global communication and academic writing. She has a B.A. in English literature from Damavand College in 1978. She has recently established Wikipages for Damavand College and others.

Aghil Zarook has been a High School instructor since 1372/1952. He is an Iranian poet and minimal writer. The theme to his poems are love and death. He is a lecturer and does presentations on the literary works. He has been awarded by different organizations all through his career. His main interest is writing Ruba'i (a stanza or poem of four lines) and Ghazal (Sonnet). He holds M.A. in Persian literature from Azad university of Chaloos. He completed his MA theses in 2014 on the theme of *A Study on the Magical Realism in Gabriel Garcia Marquez's One Hundred Years of Solitude*.